



Module 7 – Preparing an Action Plan

1 Expected outcomes of this module

The expected outcomes of this module are that Council will:

- Develop a succinct and robust action plan that includes options to reduce climate change risk and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, resource and review the plan
- Engage relevant stakeholders in the development of the plan
- Develop a strategy to integrate the action plan into strategic and business plans



Above: The Wellington, Blayney and Cabonne Strategic Alliance engaged external stakeholders in their climate change action planning workshop in February 2010

2 Resources required for module delivery

Delivery schedule	Following completion of modules 1-6
Time	Allow at least four weeks
Participants	Members of Climate Change Steering Committee or Working Group as appropriate
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change action plan (CCAP) template • Outputs of modules 1-6
Assistance	Not required

3 How to complete the module

At this point in the planning process, your Council should have identified the following:

- Priority climate change impact risks
- Adaptation actions for these risks
- Council's greenhouse gas inventory
- Options to mitigate greenhouse gases

This information gathered throughout the planning process needs to be consolidated to develop an action plan which will guide the implementation of actions to mitigate greenhouse gases and adapt to climate change. It is recommended that Council develop an integrated plan that addresses both mitigation and adaptation. However, some councils may wish to have two separate plans, especially where one has already been developed.

This module explains qualities of robust action plans that are relevant to both mitigation and adaptation plans. The module provides suggestions for how to present and promote information in a plan. The module outlines a suggested framework for the plan and a template is provided in the Appendix. The template can be tailored to suit the needs of individual councils. This module also touches on the key processes, such as stakeholder engagement, involved in developing a good plan.

Information in this module is based on the *Local Government Climate Change Adaptation Toolkit* by ICLEI Oceania (2008), *Adapting to Climate Change: A Queensland Local Government Guide* by the Local Government Association of Queensland (2007) and a review of action plans completed by councils in NSW, Australia and overseas.

3.1 Ensuring the action plan is user friendly

The action plan should be user friendly. This means it should be easy to use and understand for Council staff members, Councillors and external stakeholders, particularly members of the community. Some stakeholders may have little knowledge of how climate change may affect the Local Government Area (LGA). If a plan is not easy to navigate and comprehend it is unlikely it will be utilised or referred to in the manner that was intended.

All sections of the plan should be:

- Clear
- Concise
- Explanatory
- Logically arranged
- Consistent

Furthermore, for the plan to be regarded as a useful and reputable document it should also be:

- Relevant: While the primary purpose of the plan may be for internal planning, it also needs to be relevant for the local area, to local communities and the media. This could be achieved by including an explanatory chapter on any key issues pertinent to the LGA e.g. an area facing considerable coastal erosion may include a paragraph explaining the technical and policy aspects of this subject. Other local information that may be included could be the profile of a local climate change committee or action group that is working with council. The plan could also include the narrative used in module 2 to provide an overview of the way residents or communities are already being affected by climate related impacts

- **Plausible:** For the information within the plan and its intent to be considered plausible, the information referred to and the methods employed need to be credible and cited in the document. Consider getting your action plan reviewed by a third party e.g. a contact at another Council or an expert from a university, government agency or reputable organisation
- **Compelling:** The plan should be interesting and attractive so that the target audience and other stakeholders read beyond the first page. Consider the use of case studies, diagrams and photographs, which can aid in breaking up large sections of text and display information concisely and in a good format for visual learners. Case studies can help in making the plan relevant and plausible by outlining examples of local successes. Similarly, the inclusion of quotes or views of a sample of stakeholders can also make the plan more gripping. Consider the way in which the plan will be communicated or marketed when completed e.g. through a catchy yet descriptive title or a “Top 5 actions” or key directions within the plan

Reviewing climate change action plans by other organisations can provide ideas on which approaches may be suitable and unsuitable for the target audience.

The Steering Committee should:

- Review climate change action plans that have been drafted or completed by other organisations. Links to action plans created by organisations from NSW, Australia and overseas are available on the LGSA website
- Draft the plan with the target audience in mind and in consideration of their likely level of knowledge in relation to the plan
- Review the draft plan to ensure it is user friendly and reputable and seek feedback from the target audience prior to publishing the plan

3.2 Providing a helpful prelude

The following sections will assist in providing a helpful prelude to the plan.

3.2.2 Cover pages and formatting

Of course the plan will include a cover page with a title. It is useful to make the title of the plan clear for those who may wish to cite the report. Additionally, including the title, year of publication and full name of the council on the inside cover will help ensure the document is cited correctly. A link to the electronic version may also be useful. Other items that could be included on the inside cover include a disclaimer, the organisation’s logo and a note that the document is printed on recycled paper. Council may have protocols regarding the formatting of the document and how to record the version of the document and whether it has been endorsed by Council. Acknowledgements of those who have contributed to the plan such as the key authors, the Working Group and any external stakeholders could be listed on the inside cover or on a separate page for acknowledgements.

3.2.3 Table of contents

A table of contents should be included with page numbers for each heading and important sub-headings. This will help readers navigate the plan.

3.2.4 Foreword, message or preface

A foreword or message by the GM, Mayor or Chair of any climate change committee or group can help show Council’s commitment to addressing and planning for climate change. High level commitment is critical for an action plan as it requires investment, input and action across almost all areas across Council. This section should define Council’s stance regarding climate change and its level of commitment in regards to adaptation and/or mitigation actions.

3.2.5 Glossary

The glossary is essentially a list of terms and their definitions. A glossary is useful when words used in the plan are technical and have a specific meaning

in the context of the plan. The glossary may be placed at the start or end of a plan.

3.2.6 Executive summary

The executive summary should provide a summary of the key objectives, actions and findings outlined in the plan. A well written executive summary should highlight the main points of the climate change action plan. It should be written for a non-technical audience and those who may not have the time or inclination to read the main report. It should contain enough information for the reader to become familiar with the main body of the report.

3.3 Setting out a useful introduction

The introduction section consists of a number of components. It should explain the purpose of the plan and introduce the concepts within the plan. The following sub-headings provide a guide as to the topics that could be included in the action plan. The specific content and order of appearance of such sub-headings should be determined by the Steering Committee.

3.3.1 Objectives

As a priority, the introduction should set out the overall goals and objectives of the action plan. This section should also provide references to any links to Council's strategic plan and any other relevant plans or initiatives such as any visions or mission statements that have been developed.

3.3.2 Background

A sub-section might be included under the introduction on the background to the development of the plan. This section could explain the processes that lead to the decision to develop a climate change action plan and any previous climate change related plans or policies. This section could also note Council's existing initiatives and progress with action on climate change to date. Alternatively, the existing initiatives could be outlined in a separate section to the background.

3.3.3 Scope

This section should outline the scope of the plan, that is what is covered by the plan and what is not included. For example: whether the plan addresses climate change mitigation, adaptation or both; any council activities, services or business units not covered by the plan; whether direct and indirect emissions are covered; whether community emissions and adaptation to climate change are included in the action plan and the geographical area covered.

A map should be included showing the geographical area covered by the plan with clearly defined boundaries with other Local Government Areas and the general location within NSW. Cities, towns or population centres should be identifiable. Consider showing physical features such as coastal zones or rivers as these are likely to be affected by climate change. It may also be appropriate to note conservation areas or bushfire prone areas. A map can assist readers to understand the geographical context for the various actions in the plan.

The time horizon or horizons for risk assessment and planning should also be noted, for example, whether the plan addresses risks to 2030, 2050, 2070 and/ or 2100.

3.3.4 Climate change synopsis

The introduction could also include a very brief overview of the key likely impacts from climate change for the region and an overview of Council's emissions. Council may also wish to include an overview of recent observations which support climate change as outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

3.3.5 Stakeholders

This section should note which stakeholders were involved in the development of the plan including whose views were taken into account. It should note who may contribute to implementing the plan and stakeholders

working on similar or related projects. The introduction could outline how the action plan may fit with or build upon existing regional initiatives.

The Steering Committee should:

- Ensure the introductory elements of the plan provide suitable opening information and also explain Council's commitment and the context, objectives and scope of the plan

3.4 Outlining the process of determining actions

The plan should present not only the agreed actions for climate change mitigation or adaptation but also the methodology for how these actions were devised. This explains the rationale for the actions in the context of the climate change impacts.

3.4.1 Methodology or approach

This section should outline the methods used to identify and prioritise actions. It should note internal and external stakeholders involved and methods of consultation and collaboration (for example, workshops, meetings, forums and surveys undertaken). It should reference key sources of information and guides that were utilised such as the AGO, 2006 guidelines. This section should refer to any particular emissions scenarios or climate change scenarios that were adopted. It should also outline any assumptions Council has made in regard to the climate change impacts and associated risk statements. This section should provide an overview of the methodology and scope used in developing Council's greenhouse gas inventory. Expert input and review processes should be noted.

3.4.2 Impacts and issues

This chapter should provide an overview of climate change impacts or issues and associated risks and opportunities. A summary of the findings from

completing the previous modules should suit this purpose. Information should be provided from both an adaptation and greenhouse gas emission context.

Adaptation

This section should provide an overview of historical data and climate change projections of a bio-physical nature. Data on socio-economic factors and projections for the LGA or region should also be noted. Raw data should be limited in the main body of the report (it can be referred to in an appendix), as this section should provide a summary of issues identified from the projections. The likely impacts of climate change on the population and communities within the LGA should be explained. For example, if the population is increasing this could mean more people in the area that may be affected by extreme events in the local area.

This section should provide an overview of each relevant climate impact and list the associated priority risks. If there are numerous risks it may be preferable to list only the highest priority risk and to place the rest in an appendix. A table may be a good way to display the risk statements and the level of risk (see table 1).

Table 1: Example priority risks associated with an increase in mean annual temperatures

Risk Code	Risk Statement	Risk Level	Council Services primarily affected
AT1	Increase in average temperature increasing evaporation rates and reducing water availability leading to a greater need for water sensitive urban design to maintain open space for community satisfaction	High	Property & Commercial Development, Natural Environment
AT2	Increase in average temperatures leading to an increase in pest species impacting on public safety	High	Natural Environment

Greenhouse gas emissions

For greenhouse gas emissions, the impacts and issues chapter should include a summary of the Council's greenhouse gas inventory, including the boundaries of the inventory, the reporting year of emissions data, key emissions sources and the a reference for the source of emissions factors.

The Steering Committee should:

- Outline the adopted methodology and explain the greenhouse gas inventory, climate change impacts or issues and associated risks and opportunities for the LGA or region

3.5 Detailing the actions

Actions should be linked to the issues and impacts that they address. Actions in the plan also need to be presented in such a way that explains not only the action but how it can be implemented.

This section should assign responsibilities (who is responsible for the delivery of each element of the plan) and a timetable for completion of each action to assist (and ensure) implementation of the actions. It is recommended that the actions be presented in a table format and tailored for specific business units (i.e. one table per business unit). An example of this format is illustrated in Table 2. The example includes columns for listing other service areas which should be involved in implementing the action and other stakeholders to consider involving or informing.

Table 2 shows that this format can be used for both adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction actions. Budget information may also be included here as it will be important to finance the actions. A cost estimate could be included along with a potential source of funding for the action. Securing longer term income will be required and various sources may need to be accessed such as longer term grant funding, levies, fees or charges.

There may be some actions that do not specifically address a particular risk and/or are applicable multiple business units. These actions may be considered separately as they may require shared stakeholder responsibility and support from senior Council management. It may be appropriate to make a note against actions that are related to other climate change actions or existing or planned initiatives by council. For example, a similar action may appear in another council plan.

The action plan should also identify issues and measures which are outside Council's influence or responsibility, or extend across a wide geographic area beyond Council's boundary. This can result in planning at a regional, state or national level and a coordinated approach for more effective action.

Action plans that are designed for the community as well as Council would also include a section with actions derived by and for the community to undertake. Even if the plan is designed for Council's use it may also include a brief checklist, tips or suggested actions as a way to engage and involve any members of the community that may read the plan.

The Steering Committee should:

- Carefully present the actions with key details required for their implementation including the responsible sections of Council, stakeholders, timeframes and budget information

Table 2: Example action plan tables

Adaptation actions for infrastructure services business unit within a council

	Risks	Other service areas	Other stakeholders	Actions	Timeframe	Budget
Sea Level Rise	Increased incidence of coastal road flooding leading to road deterioration and increased maintenance costs	Natural Environment	RTA	Scoping of a more detailed Sea Level Rise and Storm Surge Plan, that includes rainfall and runoff data and identifies a timeline of balanced and cost effective adaptation measures	Long Term – <i>month, year</i>	<i>X from xyz</i>
				Identify areas which are at risk and determine possible preventative strategies (e.g. natural or engineered coastal stabilisation)	Long Term – <i>month, year</i>	

Greenhouse gas reduction actions for the landfill business unit within a council

	Risks	Other service areas	Other potential stakeholders	Actions	Timeframe	Budget
Regulation	Increase liability due to incorporation of Council owned landfills in regulation	Corporate services	Neighbouring Councils	Develop a detailed carbon management plan and strategy	Short Term – <i>month, year</i>	<i>X from xyz</i>
				Explore potential for privatising landfill	Medium Term – <i>month, year</i>	

3.6 Providing for monitoring, evaluation and review

Effective management requires regular monitoring, evaluation and review to test whether actions are having intended results and whether any previous assumptions have changed (i.e. climate change science, adaptation action criteria/effectiveness).

The monitoring, evaluation and review chapter should set out a program to ensure Council regularly monitors and reports on its progress with effectively and efficiently implementing suitable actions. This chapter should clearly outline the indicators, performance measures and/or targets that will be used to measure success. It should also identify persons responsible for conducting the review, timing, funding sources and budgets. The information in this chapter should inform the objectives of *module 8 – Reviewing the Action Plan*. Monitoring, evaluation and review plans can be set out in a table format for easy reference. Examples of these are illustrated in Table 3 and Table 4.



Above: Erosion at Tyndale North, September 2009, courtesy of Scott Lenton, Clarence Valley Council

Table 3: Example monitoring, evaluation and review of actions

Risks	Action	Indicator	Performance target	Performance measure	Comments	Adaptive Management	New indicators for adaptive management
Increased incidence of coastal road flooding leading to increased maintenance costs	Identify coastal roads which are at risk of flooding and determine possible preventative strategies	Number of coastal road areas at risk of flooding identified	3	5	The study revealed that there are more areas of risk than anticipated	Continue to liaise with the RTA and SES for at risk areas	Number of collaborative projects with external stakeholders on coastal road flooding
		Number of prevention strategies for coastal road flooding completed	2	1	More time needs to be spent on researching prevention strategies	Research 2-3 additional prevention strategies and implement preferred strategy or strategies by November	

Table 4: Example budget and resource evaluation and review

Inputs	Planned	Actual	Adaptive Management
Budget	\$a	\$d	The amount planned to be spent was spent. A larger budget of \$x will be needed for next financial year as there are more projects planned for next year.
Grant funding	\$b	\$e	Only \$e was obtained from grant funding. There were very few suitable grants on offer this financial year but more are expected to become available next financial year. Council will again aim to secure further grant funding.
Staff training/capacity building events attended by working group	2 each	Average of 3	Each person attended at least 2 training events. These proved very valuable and some were free to attend. The Working Group will aim to attend an average of 2 events next financial year also.
Stakeholder in kind contributions	\$c	\$f	A significant amount in in kind contributions was received, particularly through the community climate group which continues to provide valuable input and assistance. Council will aim to continue working with \$f in in kind contributions.

3.7 Including references

The references used in the plan should be listed in alphabetical order (with the author, date of publication, title of publication and publisher listed).

3.8 Offering further information

This section should provide a contact person and a telephone number and email address or a website from which further information can be obtained.



Above: Members of The Hills Shire Council's 'Climate Change Action Plan Working Party' at a workshop in March 2010

4 The delivery checklist

Following completion of this module, Council should have achieved the following in the development of its climate change action plan:

Task	Complete
Ensured the action plan is user friendly	Yes / No
Developed a helpful prelude	Yes / No
Set out a useful introduction	Yes / No
Outlined the process of determining actions	Yes / No
Detailed the actions	Yes / No
Provided for monitoring, evaluation and review	Yes / No
Included references	Yes / No
Offered contact details for further information	Yes / No

5 Useful references

ICLEI Oceania, 2008, *Local Government Climate Change Adaptation Toolkit*.
Australian Government Department of Climate Change.

Local Government Association of Queensland, 2007, *Adapting to Climate Change: A Queensland Local Government Guide*.

Links to useful resources are provided on the LGSA website
(www.lgsa.org.au)